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The Case of Excises considered, with Regard to the Practice of Holland, and in View to a Land-Tax.



Have now distinctly considered all the Letter-writer's Arguments for Excises, as well as his Objections against Duties on Importation, excepting only Two; which are so link'd together in his Discourse, that I chose to reserve Them for a particular Essay.

He tells us, that our Liberties can be in no Danger from such Excises; but may be as safe in this Kingdom, as in the Republic of Holland, under the same Regulations; and the Drift of his whole Pamphlet is to prove that Excises, in general, are preferable to a Land-Tax; for which He likewise produces the Example and Authority of Holland.

In Answer to This, it is necessary to observe, in the first Place, that though Holland may be justly call'd a free State, when compar'd with the absolute Governments round about it, yet I cannot agree that it ought to be compar'd with the Constitution of Great Britain, as long as We are able to preserve it pure and uncorrupt in all its Parts.

Sir William Temple (whose Authority hath been often quoted on both Sides, as an excellent Writer) observes very justly, that this sordid People, who could not endure the least Exercise of arbitrary Power, or Impositions, or the Sight of any foreign Troops, under the Spanish Government, have been since inured to all of Them, in the highest Degree, under their own popular Magistracies; bridled with hard Laws; terrified with severe Executions; environ'd with foreign Forces; and oppress'd with the most cruel Hardships and Variety of Taxes, that was ever known under any Government.

It is therefore a very extraordinary Proposal, to reduce us to the same hard Condition with our Neighbours in Holland, and sufficiently denotes the Modesty of the Projectors; but I believe They will find it as difficult to establish the same Regulations here, as to make the People of Great Britain in Love with the Government of Holland, or to throw off all Regard for the happy Constitution of their own Country.

In the next Place, it is proper to enquire into the Reasons, which make the People of Holland submit to these Severities of Government. Now These arise, as the same Author informs us, from the Simplicity and Modesty of their Magistracies in their Way of Living; which do not exceed the Customs of the common Merchants and Burghers of the Town.—He tells us likewise, that the Way to Office and Authority lies through those Qualities, which acquire the general Esteem of the People; that no Man is exempted from the Danger and Current of the Laws; that Soldiers are confined to Frontier Garrisons; (the Guard of Inland, or Trading Towns, being left to the Burghers themselves;) and that no great Riches are seen to enter by publick Payments into private Purses, either to raise Families, or to feed the prodigal Expenses of vain, extravagant and luxurious Men; but all publick Monies are apply'd to the Safety, Greatness, or Honour of the State; and the Magistrats themselves bear an equal Share in all the Burthens They impose.

Whenever therefore our great Men will be pleas'd to adopt the parsimonious Maxims of their Brethren in Holland, and reduce Themselves to some Degree of Equality with their Fellow-Subjects, it may be an Encouragement for us to submit to the same Regulations; but whilst We see Them rolling in Wealth, Luxury and Grandeur, it is the most provoking Insult to be told, that We ought to be bridled like the People of Holland.

Besides, I have been inform'd that the Dutch Excises differ very materially, in some Particulars, from Those already established in England; for in several imported Commodities (such as Wine, Tea, Coffee, &c.) every Man is tax'd at so much a Year, according to his Family and Manner of Living, by the Magistrats of the Town, in which He lives, unless He makes Oath that He uses none; but no Officers are allowed to enter his House, which is look'd upon as his Sanctuary; and consequently They have no Power, or Influence, in the Election of Magistrats.—I am far from mentioning This with any Design of recommending the same Method of Taxation in England; and am ready to give my Reasons against it, whenever such a Scheme shall be brought on the Carpet.

The Letter-writer's Argument against Land-Taxes, taken from the Example of Holland, is still more fallacious; for the Circumstances of the two Nations are so vastly different, that no just Conclusions can be drawn from one to the other. Great Britain hath a Product within itself, not only sufficient to maintain its own People, but to spare for other Countries; whereas the

Product of Holland will not maintain, as Mr. de Witt allows, one eighth Part of its Inhabitants. Great Britain hath, besides its Product, Manufactures of various Kinds; Fisheries and Mines of Lead, Tin, Copper and Coals, not only for its own Use, but exports Them in great Quantities to foreign Countries; whereas the Dutch Manufactures are neither so many, nor so great; They have no Mines; and as They are obliged to purchase the greatest Part of the common Necessaries of Life from their Neighbours, so the Income, which maintains the Government, as well as enriches the People, arises chiefly from their Trade, Fishery, and Freight of Ships.

Nothing therefore can be more ridiculous than to argue for Excises here from the Practice of Holland; where the vast Disproportion of Land to the Number of Inhabitants makes Them absolutely necessary for the Support of the Government.

I might, in this Place, complain of popular Prejudices with more Justice and Propriety than the Gentlemen on the other Side of the Question; for the grievous Burthen, which the Freeholders of Great Britain have been oblig'd to bear for above forty Years past, hath certainly press'd Them as strongly against a Land-Tax as the common People can be suppos'd to be against Excises; but with Pleasure I observe that there is no Occasion to make any such Apologies, or Complaints; since whatever Opinions some of the Land-Owners might formerly entertain on this Subject, They seem to be fully convinced of their Mistake; for I do not meet with any Body, except the Projectors and their Advocates, who discover any Inclination to this Scheme, however it may be gild'd over with the plausible Pretence of relieving Them from the Land-Tax. They now see the Hook through the Bait, and are too wise to bite at it any longer.

I shall endeavour to confirm Them in this wise Disposition and right Way of judging, for their own Interest, by the excellent Reasonings of Mr. Locke on the same Subject.

In speaking of the Causes, which raise, or depreciate the Value of Land, He makes the following Observations.

"When a Nation, says He, is running to Decay and Ruin, the Merchant and money'd Man, do what you can, will be sure to starve last. Observe it where you will, the Decays, that come upon and bring to Ruin any Country, do constantly first fall on LAND; and though the Country Gentlemen be not very forward to think so; yet This nevertheless is an undoubted Truth, that He is more concern'd in Trade, and ought to take a greater Care that it be well managed and preserv'd than even the Merchant Himself; for He will certainly find, when a Decay of Trade hath carried away one Part of our Money out of the Kingdom, and the other is kept in the Merchant's and Tradesman's Hands, that no Laws He can make, nor any little Arts of shifting Property amongst our selves, will bring it back to Him again; but his Rents will fall and his Income every Day lessen, till general Industry and Frugality, join'd to a well-order'd Trade, shall restore to the Kingdom, the Riches and Wealth it had formerly."

"This by the Way, if well consider'd, might let us see that Taxes, however contriv'd, and out of whose Hands soever immediately taken, do in a Country, where their great Fund is in Land, for the most Part terminate upon Land. Whatsoever the People is chiefly maintain'd by, That the Government supports itself on. Nay, perhaps, it will be found that those Taxes, which seem least to affect Land, will most surely of all others fall the Rents. This would deserve to be well consider'd in the raising of Taxes; lest the Neglect of it bring upon the Country Gentleman an Evil, which He will be sure quickly to feel, but not be able very quickly to remedy; for Rents, once fallen, are not easily rais'd again. A Tax laid upon Land seems hard to the Land-holder, because it is so much Money going visibly out of his Pocket; and therefore, as an Eate to Himself, the Land-holder is always forward to lay it upon Commodities; but if He will thoroughly consider it and examine the Effects, He will find He buys this seeming Ease at a very dear Rate; and though He pays not this Tax immediately out of his own Purse, yet his Purse will find it by a greater Want of Money there at the End of the Year than That comes to, with the lessening of his Rents to boot; which is a settled and lasting Evil, that will stick upon Him beyond the present Payment."

He then puts a Case, adapt'd to the Circumstances of the Times, in which He wrote; but it will equally serve to illustrate the present Argument.

"But suppose, says He, to shift off the Burthen from the Land, some Country Gentlemen should think fit to raise these three Millions (a Sum suppos'd to be wanted

"at that Time) upon Commodities, to let the Land go free. First, it is to be consider'd, that since the publick Wants require three Millions, and so much must go into the King's Coffers, or else the Necessities of the Government will not be supply'd; that for raising these three Millions on Commodities, and bringing so much into the Exchequer, there must go a great deal more than three Millions out of the Subject's Pockets; for a Tax of that Nature cannot be levied by Officers, to watch every little Rivulet of Trade, without a great Charge, especially at first Tryal. But supposing no more Charge in raising it than of a Land-Tax, and that there are only three Millions to be paid; it is evident that to do This out of Commodities, They must to the Consumer be rais'd a Quarter in their Price; so that every Thing to Him, that uses it, must be a Quarter dearer. Let us see now who at long Run must pay this Quarter, and where it will light. 'Tis plain the Merchant and Broker neither will nor can; for if He pays a Quarter more for Commodities than He did, He will sell them at a Price proportionably rais'd. The poor Labourer and Handicraftsman cannot; for He just lives from Hand to Mouth already; and all his Food, Cloathing and Utensils costing a Quarter more than They did before; either his Wages must rise with the Price of Things, to make Him live; or else, not being able to maintain Himself and Family by his Labour, He comes to the Parish; and then the Land bears the Burthen an heavy Way. If the Labourer's Wages be rais'd in Proportion to the increas'd Rates of Things, the Farmer, who pays a Quarter more for Wages, as well as all other Things, whilst He sells his Corn and Wooll either at the same Rate, or lower, at the Market, (since the Tax laid upon it makes People less forward to buy) must either have his Rent abated, or else break and run away in his Landlord's Debt; and so the yearly Value of the Land is brought down; and who then pays the Tax, at the Year's End, but the Land-lord?"

A little further He tells us, that "HOLLAND is brought as an Instance of laying the Charge of the Publick upon Trade; and it is possible (excepting some few small free Towns) the only Place in the World, that could be brought to favour this Way; but yet, when examined, will be found to shew the quite contrary, and be a clear Proof that, lay the Taxes where you will, Land every where, in Proportion, bears the greater Share of the Burthen. The publick Charge of the Government, it is said, is, in the united Provinces, laid on Trade. I grant it is, the greatest Part of it; but is the Land excus'd, or ead by it? By no means; but, on the contrary, so loaded, that in many Places Half, in others a Quarter, in others one Eighth of the yearly Value does not come into the Owner's Pocket; and, if I have not been misinform'd, the Lands, in some Places, will not pay the Taxes; so that We may say, that the Charge of the Government came not upon Commodities, till the Land could not bear it. The Burthen unavoidably settles upon the Land first, and when it hath press'd it so, that it can yield no more, Trade must be brought in Aid, to help to support the Government, rather than let All sink; but the first Strefs is always upon Land; and as far as That will reach, it is unavoidably carried, lay your Taxes how you will. It is known what a Share of the publick Charges of the Government is supported by the Trade of Amsterdam alone. As I remember that one Town pays thirty-six in the Hundred of all the publick Taxes rais'd in the united Provinces; but are the Lands of Guelderland ead by it? Let any one see in that Country of Land, more than Trade, what They make clear of their Revenues, and whether the Country Gentlemen there grow rich on their Land, whilst the Merchants, having the Taxes laid on his Commerce, is impoverish'd. On the contrary, Guelderland is so low and out of Cash, that Amsterdam hath been fain, for many Years, to lay down the Taxes for Them; which is, in Effect, to pay the Taxes of Guelderland too."

"Struggle and contrive as you will; lay your Taxes as you please; the Traders will shift it off from their own Gain; the Merchants will bear the least Part of it, and grow poor last. In Holland it self, where Trade is so loaded, who, I pray, grows richest; the Land-holder, or the Trader? Which of Them is pinch'd, and wants Money most?—A Country may thrive, the Country Gentlemen grow rich, and his Rents increase, (for so it hath been here) whilst the Land is taxed; but I challenge any one to shew me a Country, where there is any considerable Charge rais'd, and in Proportion bear much the greater Part of it."

I believe the Reader will not look upon these Quotations as tedious, or unnecessary, though They have swell'd my Paper to such an unusual Length. For my Part, They seem to very apposite to the Purpose, to clear, full, and even demonstrative, that if the grievous Load of a long continued Land Tax should have still left some Prejudices in the Minds of the *British Free-holders*, a due Attention to the Scope and Force of these Arguments must, I think, root Them up and intirely dissipate Them any.

These Gentlemen would likewise do well to consider that altho' They have long groan'd under the Pressure of a Land Tax, yet it hath been continued only from Year to Year, for the current Expences of the Government; and as there is a great Number of the most considerable Land-holders in both Houses of Parliament, it may be reasonably supposed that They will lay hold of the first Opportunity to ease Themselves from this Burthen. Whereas We are taught by Experience that *Excises* commonly become perpetual, even almost without Exception, when They are once laid; and as this Scheme is design'd only to supply the Necessities of the Government, in Time of Peace, so the Projectors will, I fear, have Recourse to a Land Tax, upon the first extraordinary Occasion either at home or abroad, without giving up a Shilling of the *Excise*; and then I think the Freeholders of Great Britain cannot be in a worse Condition, unless the Projectors should think fit, in their great Wisdom, to collect the Land Tax also by the *Law of Excise*.

It will be said, perhaps, that the Parliament hath it in their Power to reduce the *Excise*, whenever it grows exorbitant, or burthenome; but This I deny, if it should be made perpetual; for in such a Case, They cannot do it without the Consent of the Crown; and I think it somewhat improbable that the Court will ever part with such a Jewel, as long as they can keep it.

Besides, all Attempts to diminish any Revenue, when it is granted, are thought invidious, and treated as Marks of Disaffection to the Government itself. This deters many Persons from joining in any such Attempts, and others are prevail'd upon by Goodnature, plausible Pretences, or Applications of a worse Kind; so that the only wise Method of keeping the Crown within its proper Bounds, is to suppress all Incroachments in their Birth.

Lastly, let it be considered that if the Crown should ever obtain a standing Revenue, sufficient to defray all the ordinary Expences of the Government, (and nobody can pretend to say what a general *Excise* may produce) what Occasion will there be for the Parliament to meet at all, unless upon extraordinary Emergencies?

As I chose to illustrate and strengthen the former Part of this Paper with the Authorities of Sir William Temple and Mr. Locke, it may be proper to acquaint the Reader that what I have said last is as strongly supported by the Reasonings of Mr. Hampden, who prefers a Land Tax, or even the Revival of the *Chimney-Money* to any Kind of *Excises*; which must end, as He observes very justly, in a general *Excise*.

He concludes his Considerations on this Subject, as I shall do at present, in the following remarkable Words.

"One Thing, I think, all are for; the preserving of the Constitution, and the maintaining our Liberty, for the sake whereof all this Money is to be raised; and That is All, which I am pleading for. Let no Man be misled by a Pretence of Convenience, or disburthening his Land in this Way of Taxing. All Those are mistaken Arguments; and though They were not so; tho' all the Conveniences in the World were to be found in this new Method; though there were ever so great Ease to our Lands in it; yet the single Consideration of what the Nation hazards in giving a Revenue, that probably will never be discontinued, and the Danger, to which the Liberties of the Kingdom will be exposed, if ever the Crown shall be rich enough to govern without Parliaments, is abundantly sufficient to over-balance whatever can be alleged to the contrary from Topicks of present Ease, or private Interest. The Constitution, the Constitution is our Happiness. Let any Inconveniences be submitted to, rather than That be brought into Danger. We stand upon a needless Point. The Revenue of the Crown is so very high already, that one Revenue more does our Business. England can never be undone, but by its own Consent. Have a Care then of giving that fatal Consent. We have hitherto been the Enemy of all our Neighbours for our Liberties, and the Privileges We enjoy; the greatest of which is being governed by Laws, made by our own Representatives. All We have is owing to the Preservation of Parliaments, and making their frequent Meetings necessary. Let Taxes be laid so, that They may cease with their Cause, and so Parliaments may not become unnecessary.—I shall stop here and say no more concerning a Land Tax, because this Paper is too long already; and because my chief Intent in writing it, as I said before, was not so much to urge Arguments for a Land Tax, as to offer some Considerations, which might shew the Danger of a General *Excise*. This Subject will be concluded in our next.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Seville, Nov. 15. Several Conferences have been held of late between his Excellency Mr. Keen and the Spanish Ministers, wherein 'tis said they came to an Agreement to send joint Orders to the *West Indies* for all Hostilities

to cease on both Sides; at the same Time the Court dispatch'd Orders to Cadix for an Advice Boat to sail forthwith for Jamaica, with the Orders of his Britannick Majesty for restoring the Register Ship last taken by the Subjects of Great Britain.

LONDON, December 9.

Monday died of a violent inflammatory Fever, at the Duke of Queensberry's House in Burlington Gardens, Mr. JOHN GAY: He was descended of a Gentleman's Family in Devonshire, and had been Secretary to the Embassy to Hanover in the last Year of Queen Anne, where he had the Honour of being personally known by the Royal Family, to which he express'd his Loyalty and Affection in some excellent Poems. He was one of the most eminent Poets, and in some Parts of writing the most eminent, of his Age. His personal Character was perfectly amiable; the most natural, inoffensive, and disinterested of Men. His Conversation was sought by all that knew him, and his Life chiefly pass'd in the Friendship and Society of Persons of the first Rank. He left a moderate Fortune, no Part owing to any Preferment, but wholly to his own Labour and Prudence, between two Sisters. No Place is vacant by his Death.

They write from Chester that last Week Watkin William Wynn, Esq; Knight of the Shire for the County of Denbigh, was chosen an Alderman of that City, in the Room of Alderman Allen, deceased. And

That Mr. Manley continues to make Interest, as a Candidate to represent that City in Parliament in the Room of Sir Richard Grosvenor, deceased.

Thursday Evening was held a Court at Bridewell, before Mr. Alderman Parsons, Sir Francis Child, Knt. Mr. Sheriff Alfop, and a large Number of Governors, when Mr. Newland, an eminent Attorney at Law, as Governor, received his Charge: Several petty Criminals were try'd, corrected, acquitted and discharged; several of the last being committed only on the Evidence of a hired informing Constable, supported by the Society for the Reformation of Manners, which he frankly own'd, and justify'd by a Scripture S rap. That the Labourer was worthy of his Hire; but the whole Proceeding of this Set of unauthoriz'd Reformers, an Affront to publick Magistracy, was received by the Court with the Contempt it deserv'd; and some of the supposed Criminals directed to an Action of false Imprisonment and Damages against the Prosecutor, of whom it being enquir'd, why these worthy Gentlemen did not secure the Men as well as Women, when equally guilty; it was answer'd, that they had too severely smarted in the Case of the much injur'd Mr. Geery.

On Saturday there was a Cause heard in the Exchequer Court at Westminster, between the Right Hon. the Lord Craven, and Mr. Thomas a Builder, for a Sum of Money claimed of his Lordship for a Building near Carnaby-Market: The Trial lasted best Part of the Day, and the Jury gave a Verdict for Mr. Thomas for 180-l. being the Matter in Dispute, besides Cost of Suit. And

The same Day was try'd at Westminster, before the Lord Chief Justice Eyre, a Cause depending between the Company of Glovers, London, Plaintiffs, and a Glovemaker in the Strand, Defendant, he being sued for carrying on the Trade of a Glove maker, not having served seven Years thereto; and after a Trial of near two Hours the Jury, without going out, brought in a Verdict for the Plaintiffs, with Damages and Costs of Suit.

We hear from Ipswich in Suffolk, that on the 27th of last Month, one Bexley and Roundery, two notorious Smugglers, who have been at the Head of a Gang of upwards of 50 Persons, were taken by the Custom-house Officers, with the Assistance of Honeywood's Dragoons, and committed close Prisoners to the Town Gaol: A Reward of 100-l. was some time since offer'd by the Government for apprehending Bexley and 50-l. for Roundery.

Charles Towers, Esq; Member of Parliament for Lancaster, and his Brother, Thomas Towers, Esq; Member of Parliament for Wareham in Dorsetshire, has obtained a Grant of the Reversion of the Place of Auditors of his Majesty's Revenue, after the Decease of Auditor Harcy and Auditor Foley.

Tuesday both Houses of Parliament met at Westminster, pursuant to their Prorogation; when the Lord Chancellor farther prorogued the Parliament to Tuesday the 16th of January next, then to be held there.

The Torrington Man of War, Capt. Philip Parry, having the Corps of the late Duke of Bedford on board, arrived at Portsmouth on Monday Morning, in 17 Days from Lisbon.

Last Saturday Mr. Bennet, Master of a Peter Boat, who lives at Hammersmith, brought up his Boy dead in his Boat, and pretended that he fell from the Fore-top and broke his Skull, but upon searching the Boy he was found to have been beaten and bruised all over; the Coroner's Inquest sat on the Body, and brought in their Verdict *Willful Murder*; and the Master was taken up and carried before a Magistrate, who committed him to Newgate.

Last Week two Persons were taken into Custody in Southwark for aiding and assisting a Man, not yet taken, in lying with a Girl of 12 Years of Age about Easter last. The Girl is now with Child, and within Six Weeks of her Time, and is not thirteen Years of Age till March next.

They write from Bath, that on Monday last died there Dr. Baker, Bishop of Norwich, aged 64.

Wednesday was to have come on before a Special Jury, at the King's Bench, Westminster, the Trial of Mr. Lowfield on an Indictment for Perjury, in justifying himself as Bail for a Person for a certain Sum of Money; but the Word *Caperet* being in the Indictment, and *Caperet* in the Record, the Trial went off. The same Day began the Sessions at the Old Bailey, when Henry Neale was capitally convicted for Burglary.

Last Week a large Quantity of Marble Paper, &c. was seized at a Publick House near the Royal Exchange by the Custom-house Officers.

Rob. Yesterday se'nnight as Mr. Foster of Endfield was coming to Town with his Servant, between Four and Five in the Evening, two Rogues set upon him in a Lane not far from that Place, and his Horse starting, he fell and was very much bruised; notwithstanding which they used him very barbarously, and among the rest, took both his Horfes with them, and his Cloak Bag which was on the Servant's Horse.

Mar. Last Week Richard Vaughan, Esq; Knight of the Shire for the County of Merioneth, was married to Miss Nanny, of Nanny-Hall in the same County; a rich Heiress—Robert Featherby, Esq; an eminent Merchant of this City, to Mrs. Chandler, Relict of Mr. Chandler, Well India Merchant, a Fortune of 30,000-l.—Mr. Guernsey, Son of Mr. Guernsey, Apothecary in Pall Mall, to the Daughter of Governor Roberts, an agreeable young Lady, and a Fortune of 10,000-l.

Dead. A few Days since died at his Seat near Lancaster, Fenwick, Esq; a Gentleman of about 1000-l. per Annum, which falls to his Son, Counsellor Fenwick of Lincoln's Inn.—Mr. Benjamin Parker, Chief Clerk of the Bank Transfer Books, reputed worth 10,000-l.—Thomas Douce, of Nether Wallop in the County of Southampton, Esq;—The Rev. Mr. Ilive, (who kept a School at Kensington) Minister of Heston near Hounslow in Middlesex, which Living, worth about 100-l. per Ann. is in the Gift of the Bishop of London, who presented Mr. Ilive to it about a Year ago, in the Room of Mr. Wood, deceased.—Monday about Five o'Clock in the Afternoon died Mr. Whitaker, at his Apartments in the Tower. About seven Weeks ago he was bit in the Hand by a mad Dog, and being timorous of the Consequence that might attend it, he went twice down to be dipped in the Salt Water, and continued very well till last Sunday, when he assured several of his Acquaintance he should die the next Day, and raving mad. Accordingly the e were ten or twelve Persons attended him all the Day, and tied him down in his Bed with Cords, yet still he retain'd his Senses so far, as to desire all the Persons about him to put on two Pair of Gloves each, for he should certainly bite them. A small Time before he expired he bark'd ten or twelve Times like a Dog.—Mr. George Monk, a wealthy Dyer, Deputy of Dowgate Ward.—Mr. Jenkins, formerly a noted Banker in Lombard-street, at his Lodgings in Colman-street.—Mr. John Bullock, Master of the Crown Tavern in New-Palace-Yard, Westminster.—Captain Martin, an experienced Officer in the Army; who served in several Campaigns in Flanders under his Grace the late Duke of Marlborough, during the Time of the late War with France; and in a very particular Manner signalized himself in the great Battle at Ramillies, where he had the Command of a Troop, and had two Horfes shot under him that Day.

On Sunday next there will be two Charity Sermons preached at the Parish Church of St. Stephen, Colman-street, for the Benefit of forty poor Boys of the Parish of St. Giles's, Cripplegate, Middlesex; That in the Morning by the Rev. Mr. WHEATLEY of Christ Church in Spittle-fields, and Lecturer of St. Leonard in Shoreditch; and That in the Afternoon by the Rev. Mr. HEXTOL of St. Olave in Southwark, and Lecturer of St. Michael Bassishaw.

Thursday South Sea Stock was 104 3/8ths. South S A Annuity 109 1 qr. Bank 149 3 qrs. India 154 3 8ths.

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